

Meyah language

Meyah (**Meax**) is a West Papuan language spoken in Miyah District, Tambrauw Regency of West Papua, Indonesia. The Meyah language is agglutinative and head-marking, and has no grammatical cases. It has subject-object-verb word order, which comes from nearby Austronesian languages.^[3]

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Phonology

Meax has 5 vowels: /a, ɛ, i, o, u/, and 13 consonants.^[3]

Meyah	
Native to	Indonesia
Region	Miyah District, Tambrau w Regency, West Papua
Native speakers	15,000 (2000) ^[1]
Language family	West Papuan <ul style="list-style-type: none">East Bird's Head<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mantion–Meax<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meax languages<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meyah
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	mej
Glottolog	meya1236 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/meya1236) ^[2]



Consonants

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	voiceless		<u>t</u>		<u>k</u>	
	voiced	<u>b</u>	<u>d</u>		<u>g</u>	
Fricative	voiceless	<u>f</u> / <u>ɸ</u> /	<u>s</u>	<u>c</u> / <u>ç</u> /		<u>h</u>
	voiced			<u>j</u> / <u>ɟ</u> /		
Nasal		<u>m</u>	<u>n</u>			
Trill			<u>r</u>			

Pitch-accent

Like many other Papuan languages of the Bird's Head Peninsula, Meyah is a pitch-accent language with two phonemic pitch levels: rising high and falling high, which contrast.

Rising Falling

- *éj* 'drink' *èj* 'peel'
- *mós* 'fish' *mòs* 'toad'

Grammar

Pronouns

Pronouns demonstrate three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. The first person dual and plural pronouns also demonstrate clusivity.

Free

	Singular	Dual		Plural	
		inc.	exc.	inc.	exc.
1st	didif	nagif	magif	mimif	memef
2nd	bua	goga		iwa	
3rd	ofa			rua	

Possessive prefixes

	Singular	Dual		Plural	
		inc.	exc.	inc.	exc.
1st	di-	na-	ma-	mi-	me-
2nd	bi-	ge-		i-	
3rd	ø-			ri-	

These prefixes are used for verbs, body parts and kinship terms.

Nouns

Nouns in Meyah are divided into two types: alienable and inalienable, the latter of which includes terms for body parts and kinship relations, and are obligatorily marked for possessor. With alienable nouns, there is morphological complexity. The plural marker '-ir' can only be used with humans, pigs and dogs. There is no other method of indicating plurality for other alienable nouns. For inanimate nouns, plurality may be indicated by certain modifiers such as *mod ofokou* 'house many' or *mod efaga orgomu* 'house CLF three.'

Kinship

Kinship terms, as inalienable nouns, share the same possessor prefixes as body parts and verb stems, however they differ in the singular possessive prefixes. Instead of the '(C)i-' prefix found on first and second singular prefixes, kinship terms have 'ed-' (1st singular) and 'eb-' (2nd singular). On verbs and other inalienable nouns, the third person singular possessive prefix is normally unmarked, but kinship terms use the same prefix as the first person plural exclusive, 'me-.' Terms for important kinship relations have divergent morphology, like the lack of a first-person singular possessive prefix for father 'akeina' and mother 'ameina,' which are also used to refer to father and mothers' brothers respectively.

Classes

There are six classes of nouns, which are differentiated on the basis of their classifier when they are modified by a numeral. The first class is a class used exclusively for humans. Classes two and three relate for food, with the former being for food growing underground and the latter being for food growing on trees and vines. When this food is removed from trees or vines, it is classified according to whether it is 'round,' placed in the fourth class, and 'flat,' found in the fifth class. Class six consists of terms for animals and 'house.'^[3]

References

1. Meyah (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/mej/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Meyah" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/meya1236>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. "WALS Online -" (<https://wals.info/refdb/record/Ode-2002>). *wals.info*. Retrieved 2018-08-18.

Further reading

- Gravelle, Gilles (2002). "Morposyntactic Properties of Meyah Word Classes". In Ger P. Reesink (ed.). *Languages of the Eastern Bird's Head*. Pacific Linguistics. **524**. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University. pp. 109–180. hdl:1885/146144 (<https://hdl.handle.net/1885%2F146144>).
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